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Mud and Ashes.

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MUD AND ASHES

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by

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ABSTRACT

The artist discusses the work in *Mud and Ashes,* his Master of Fine Arts exhibition held at Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, from March 28 to April 1, 2005. The exhibition marks a turning point in the artist's work, occupying a beginning place as he completes his graduate career. The work consists of fifteen paintings and one sculptural installation. The paintings are on paper and employ local materials such as red clay, pollen, and beeswax along with traditional artist's materials such as oil and charcoal. Fire and a power sander have also been used as drawing tools. Each painting is 22 x 22 inches square and hangs directly on the wall, unmounted and unframed.

Topics discussed include the artist's development and work leading up to and including the exhibition works; the influences of Sung Dynasty Chinese landscape painting, Zen Buddhism, aboriginal art, nature, myth and ritual; the influences of artists Montien Boonma, Paul Cezanne, Jim Dine, Andy Goldsworthy, Morris Graves, Brice Marden, Georgio Morandi, Kiki Smith, Mark Tobey, and Cy Twombly; and the influences of composer John Cage and poet Gary Snyder.

Included are images of the artist's earlier work as well as a complete catalogue of the *Mud and Ashes* exhibition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One night in the summer of 1996, I stood beside the river in downtown Providence, Rhode Island, with my wife-to-be, witnessing artist Barnaby Evans' *Waterfire,* a living sculpture composed of several dozen floating braziers containing fires that burned throughout the night. The fires were set up in a line with equal distance between them following a bend in the river and culminating in a circle around a fountain. Sacred music from various cultural traditions, an important component of the piece, surrounded us as we walked slowly along, flowing with the crowd, feeling the heat, passing through smoke. *Waterfire* was beautiful, elemental, direct, and charged with the "something" that human beings have been attempting to depict for millennia in response to their environment. It was not so much art about the experience of Nature as it was Nature speaking through art. Somehow both perfectly wild and comfortably urban, it existed entirely in the present moment. I seemed to be perpetually engaged with the fires without thoughts of past or future—perpetually present. I felt my perception change. It was not me seeing and recognizing fire, but rather it was more of a participatory perception. I truly felt that I, the perceiver, and the artwork, the perceived, were joined in an interdependent relationship—a perceptual reciprocity in which I saw the fire and it in turn "saw" me. It was, as David Abram states in *The Spell of the Sensuous,* a "cooperative endeavor, a work of cocreation in which the dynamism and power of earth-born materials is honored and respected" (278). Wood, water, and fire "in return for this respect…contribute their more-than-human resonances to human culture" (278). Needless to say, this was a transformative experience for me as an artist.

At the time, I had been trying to make art that addressed my love of wilderness, environmental concerns, and interest in ancient, non-Western mythologies. I was making paintings but felt that paint could not take me where I needed to go—into the soil, into the real. Irving Petlin, a friend of the sculptor Eva Hesse, spoke of

Hesse's similar dilemma: "Painting can only go so far to supply that logic of realness. Her painting wasn't 'real' enough for her" (Sussman 19). Barnaby Evans' piece opened a window of possibility for me. I began to use the stuff of nature in my work, creating assemblages of primary materials—soil, stones, sticks—borrowing and interpreting the forms and symbols used by ancient humanity as they "conversed" with their world—mounds, stone rings, concentric circles, and spirals.

I was in search of that "something" that I felt was at the heart of *Waterfire*. But the search, ultimately, was then more concerned with how to "speak about" that "something" rather than touching it, experiencing it, bringing it to life. My focus was more on outcomes, finished pieces, as opposed to process. I made these pieces for several years until they reached what I perceived was their logical conclusion, meaning that they had become formulaic, self-conscious, and intellectualized as opposed to spontaneous, intuitive, and improvised. Teaching drawing at an alternative arts high school brought me back to mark-making, and I returned to painting. The work I made was still in search of that "something." I addressed nature, my deepening Zen practice (which I undertook in 1996), and myth, continuing in this vein until entering graduate school at ETSU in the fall of 2002.

It was two and a half years into my graduate career that I had a realization of something my Zen teachers had been pointing to for years: the "something" I had been seeking had been present all along. It is nature/the world internalized, intimate, a fermentation of experience like compost, the soil in the ground of being. It is not something to be found but a place from which to proceed. It is a space of not knowing, a beginner's mind, free of ego, sentimentality, and habit—an empty space that is "the void that is full of potential…[that] has no bounds" (Aitken 76).

In my studio is an array of objects that I collect on my walks through mountains, fields, and barns. (Finding a tooth in a coyote scat is buried treasure to me.) While I have made a number of drawings and paintings of these objects, they are more important to me for what they embody. The bones, shells, claws, teeth,

skulls, feathers, pine cones, and wasps' nests collectively speak of impermanence, of interconnectedness, of birth and death, of myth and ritual. There is a silence in them and in that silence a deeper silence still. In his poem "One Should Not Talk to a Skilled Hunter about What Is Forbidden by the Buddha," American poet Gary Snyder notes it as "the secret / and the secret hidden deep in that" (*No Nature* 245). My art practice proceeds from that secret silence. With beeswax, pollen, red clay, top soil, powdered graphite, and charcoal, and perhaps most importantly, fire, I am creating, or rather collecting, images and forms as if in some aged, organic book, a codex for a forgotten language, or perhaps, less esoterically speaking, a journal—marking time, as my professor Mira Gerard said, "in the same way a fossil, footprint, or impression on a bed" mark time and experience.

In his *Genjo Koan,* Zen master Dogen writes, "To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by the myriad things [all of nature]. When actualized by myriad things, body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of realization remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly" (70). It is from this no-trace that my art is born.

2. ZEN

What is Zen? Simply put, it is realizing what Shunryo Suzuki Roshi ("roshi" is a Japanese honorific for "Zen master") calls "things as it is" (37). Zen is fully engaging your life as it is, without all the trappings one mentally adds to it. A popular answer to the question "What is Zen?" is "chopping wood and carrying water." In other words, it is not special, but ordinary. It is one's everyday life as one experiences it. Zen teaches one to recognize the truth of one's existence—that it is impermanent and interdependent with all of creation, or "empty" of self. That is, empty of a separate, individuated self. In the Buddhist canon, the Prajnaparamita Sutra (Heart of Wisdom Sutra) tells us that all dharmas (phenomena) are empty. But it reveals to us that everything, absolutely everything in the cosmos inter-is with everything else (Hanh 10). This realization of emptiness is before thought, beyond language, and is located perpetually in the present moment. It gives birth to intuition, spontaneous action, and openness to the great love and great sadness of this life.

Zen Buddhism underpins my art practice. In truth, there is no separation between them. Zen and art making are one thing. Not long ago, Zen manifested in my work most notably as content. The compositions were minimal, uncluttered. The objects were ordinary, unadorned. The bowl form emerged as the dominant motif, at first because of its very ordinariness, and later as a vehicle to represent spiritual practice.

Formally the vessel pieces were informed by the still-life paintings of Paul Cezanne and Giorgio Morandi. What I took from Cezanne was a shifting point of view through a changing of eye levels and the splitting of planes to create tension between the ground, or surface, of the picture, the figure, or bowl form, and the illusion of a three-dimensional space. One eye level may reveal the front plane of an object while a second may reveal others from high above or slightly below. The distortion creates a paradox between an illusion of three-dimensional space and a direct relationship to the flatness of the picture plane. The tension between planes creates a

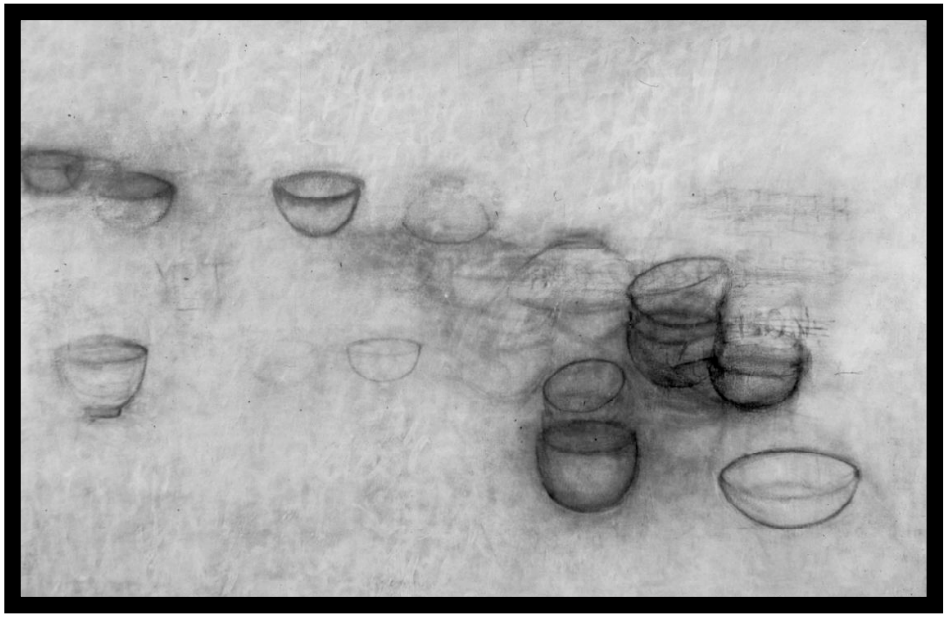


Fig. 1 Pilgrimage

acrylic and oil on canvas
44 x 56 inches, 2003

mysterious sense of space that is more emotional and spiritual than geometrical or "realistic." This device, sometimes called "universal perspective" (Loran 76), was the beginning of my understanding of abstraction and the inner workings of a compositional space. The painting, *Pilgrimage* (figure 1) makes use of this distortion to create an ambiguous sense of space. Like Cezanne, I work by feeling and intuition, but where his "distortions [arise] from the inner necessities of the particular problem at hand" (Loran 77), mine come about through a careful consideration of his work.

Quite simply, Georgio Morandi's still-lifes gave me permission to group objects in clusters and to use "incorrect" composition. Morandi piles objects—a handful of bottles, jars, or bowls—in the center of a picture plane. *Thus Come One* (figure 2) clusters objects in the lower right corner of an atmospheric mysterious space. His palette is limited, like mine, and his rendering is plain, without ornamentation or any revelation as to what sort of space the objects are occupying. His still-lifes are mysterious, atmospheric, and utterly without pretension. There is a Zenlike quietude about them: "restrained, rather severe, and not overtly sensuous," Morandi's work demands "that viewers exert themselves if they are to discover its true character" (Wilkin 7).

Fig. 2 Thus Come One

acrylic on canvas
30 x 36 inches, 2002

But, it was upon being exposed to the drawings and sculpture of the late Thai artist Montien Boonma that I began to attach symbolic significance to the bowl image. Boonma often works with the bowl form—his being based on the alms bowls carried by the forest monks in Thailand. Boonma drew them "every morning from 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. as part of meditation," and he chose to concentrate on the bowl form because it "is organic and geometric and ambiguous" (Poshyaranda 78). My choice of the bowl form came because it is so familiar and universal. I found a direct relationship between Boonma's alms bowls and my unadorned vessels. Boonma's bowls can be seen as "both abstract and realistic depictions of vessels symbolic of the mind, the skull, the body" (Poshyaranda 78). Boonma's relationship with the bowl form grew so close that he once said, "I gazed into the bowl, after a while the bowl gazed back at me" (Poshyaranda 62).

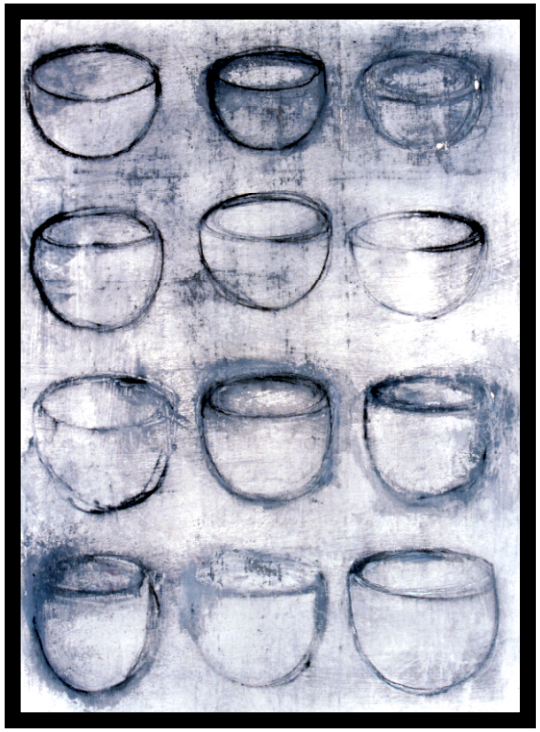


Fig. 3 12 Turnings

gesso and charcoal on paper
28 x 20 inches, 2004

The bowl becomes for me the bell that begins and ends my morning meditation period. It is a stand-in for sitting or prostrating figures. In multiples it became chant, mantra, or ritual as with the drawing *12 Turnings* (figure 3). Large and singular, it became emptiness itself. The bowl was at once a simple bowl and a container for all life.

Stephen Batchelor, in his *Verses From the Center: A Buddhist View of the Sublime*, cites verse four of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* in which the ancient sage writes of the Tao, or the Way, as "...an empty vessel/That may be drawn from/Without ever needing to be filled/It is bottomless; the very progenitor of all things in the world" (12). My encaustic painting *Karuna* (figure 4) is meant to depict just such a bottomless vessel.

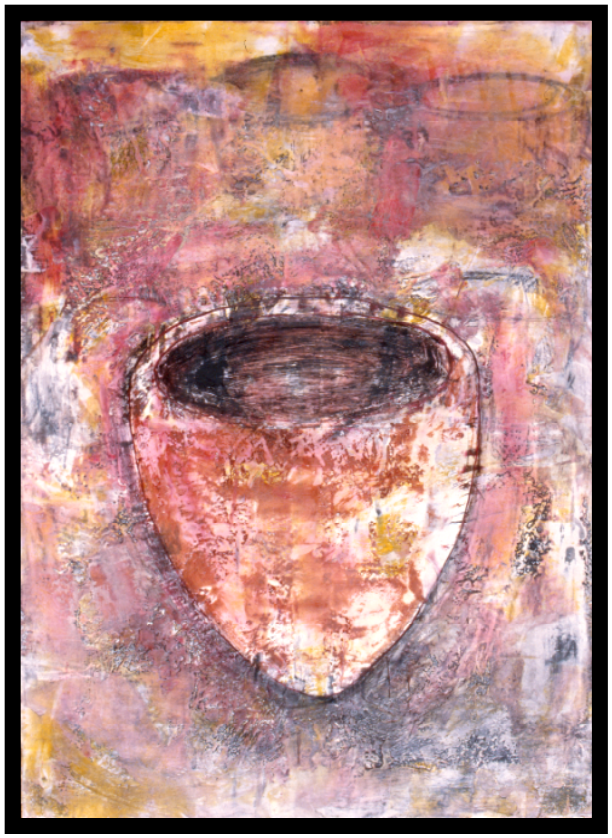


Fig. 4 Karuna

oil and beeswax on panel
17 x 23 inches, 2004

3. EARTHWARDS

Parallel to my compositional investigations with the bowl form, I began an exploration of the local landscape of Upper East Tennessee as it was being "composed" by the presence of cattle and the fences that defined their pastures. I passed by these views daily and was fascinated with how the verticals and horizontals of the fences delineated the space and how these played against the curving and sweeping lines formed by the cow paths. These works were also motivated by my witnessing the encroachment of suburban development into this landscape. The paintings and drawings were at once an investigation of a visual environment and a document of the disappearing family farm.

Taking cues from Chinese landscape painting of the Sung Dynasty and the late work of American painter Brice Marden, and continuing my use of the ambiguous pictorial space, these paintings began a process that walks a fine line between improvisation and mindfulness that I employ to this day. These paintings pulled me toward abstraction, for as much as I identified with the land, I was more interested in the way the land was being "drawn" by the presence of cattle. The drawing, *Meander*, (figure 5) traces a cow path around a dry stock pond.

Fig. 5 Meander

red clay, gesso, graphite on paper
28 x 20 inches, 2004

Fig. 6 Faint Music

red clay, gesso, graphite on paper, 10 x 28 inches, 2004

In Sung Dynasty landscape painting, there is always the presence of humans interacting with the land. Despite the minimal nature of my compositions, this was true of my landscapes as well, evidenced by the fence posts. *Faint Music* (figure 6) follows the remnants of an old path through a gate. It was not my intention to make paintings that looked like or evoked Chinese landscape painting but ones that emerged from the same "power that conceived the aesthetics" of that form (Stomberg 8).

My continued use of an ambiguous, atmospheric space reflected that of the misty peaks and fog-enshrouded lakes of Sung period paintings and found an affinity with Brice Marden's paintings and drawings of the late 1980s and 1990s. Marden takes an "atmospheric" approach to backgrounds by merely "implying depth and space" (Wylie 31), while engaging in "a sustained effort to develop a spiritual system of drawing that places the direct observation of nature in a new context" (Stomberg 44). It is an observation is done with the inner eye. Like Marden, I was attempting to infuse my landscapes with spiritual resonance, one of the "precepts" of Chinese painting as set forth by sixth century art critic Hsieh Ho in his *Six Canons of Painting* (Stomberg 50). In Marden's work, especially the *Cold Mountain* paintings, there is an elusiveness that creates "transitory meanings" that shift

perception and defy static labeling (Stomberg 72). In the *Cold Mountain* paintings, dense networks of black lines on a neutral ground create an illusion of space and evoke natural forms while at the same time cleaving to the flatness of the picture plane. Marden paints out some of his meandering black lines with white or scratches them down to the canvas revealing the process of their creation. While based in nature and Eastern philosophy, these works are ultimately about the act of painting. It is the intersection of elusiveness and allusiveness, of evocation and invocation, that I find in both Marden's and the Sung Dynasty paintings and that I hope to achieve in my own work.

In pieces like *Intimately* and *Around Back* (figures 7 and 8), I sought to evoke the local landscape. The abstraction of the drawing and the elusive nature of the space it inhabits (the push and pull between flatness and the illusion of space), however, locate the fences and paths spiritually rather than geographically. Like Marden I am searching out a new context for the direct observation and experience of my everyday world.

Fig. 7 Intimately

beeswax and oil on panel
17 x 23 inches, 2004

Fig. 8 Around Back

beeswax and oil on panel
30 x 22 inches, 2004

4. WILD(ERNESS)

While the exploration of fields and fence rows was developing satisfactorily, I wished to expand the investigation into my experience of wild nature and my environmental concerns. Despite having moved toward abstraction in dealing with the cultivated landscape, this new phase of my work saw a move back toward representation.

Rather than attempting to encompass the vastness of the forest, with all its complexity, in a drawing or painting, I chose to home in on the minutiae— bones, pine cones, birds' and wasps' nests. In their delicate interior architecture, I saw an allegory for the fragility of our planet. In drawings and paintings, I hoped to get at the deep silence I found at the core of these objects—the emptiness, the interbeing. It was with this series of pieces that I began to work exclusively on paper and to stain it with the red clay so ubiquitous in this region, trying to reflect the organic nature of the subject in the materials.

The sculptor and printmaker Kiki Smith became an important artist for me during this period. In her works on paper—particularly her animal images—I recognized a kindred spirit. In pieces such as *Destruction of Birds* and *Peabody (Animal Drawings),* one can see what she calls "the precarious state of the environment, and our vital connection to it" (Weitman 28). In Smith I found an artist interested

Fig. 9 To John Muir

red clay and graphite on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

Fig. 10 Chamber Music

red clay, gesso, graphite on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

Fig. 11 Grass Mud Spit Time 2

red clay and graphite on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

in nature and the non-human world not for scenic value or for sentimental reasons, but because "it has been devalued in this century in favor of culture" and "the fate of humankind is intimately interconnected with the health of the environment and that we may all be vulnerable" (Posner 26).

Perhaps in a symbolic gesture toward recognizing this vulnerability I began the ritual practice of scarring the paper with a power sander. Using a Black and Decker "Mouse," I ground red clay or powdered graphite into the surface. Holes would appear—wounds through which light might pass or through which a viewer might enter the life of a piece. The sander was often used to push an image back into the surface, to integrate it with the ground. One can see evidence of this process in *To John Muir*, *Chamber Music*, and the series of birds' nests I called *Grass Mud Spit Time 2* (figures 9, 10, and 11).

Compositionally, I was referencing Smith, Jim Dine's tool drawings, and, again, Sung Dynasty landscape painting. The vertical format was meant to evoke the scroll, and the (usually) central or ascending location of the object was meant to give them an iconic status as if these pieces were to be used as objects in meditation. Again, I was hoping to achieve the spiritual resonance called for in Chinese painting. I mined this vein into the autumn of 2004, making drawings and encaustic paintings like *Chamber Music 3* (figure 12), trying to find a visual language for what my experience was. In the paper and clay I had the surface and with encaustic I had the technique, but I felt at a remove from my subject.

Fig. 12 Chamber Music 3

beeswax, red clay, oil on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

5. ENKAUSTIKOS

Enkaustikos (Greek): to heat, to burn.

In January 2004 I began a workshop on the encaustic painting technique. This technique consists of applying melted beeswax (sometimes) mixed with pigment to a porous ground, in my case paper. Encaustic painting is an ancient practice begun in Greece by shipbuilders who "used beeswax to caulk the joints and waterproof the hulls of their vessels" (Mattera 15). The shipbuilders began the practice of pigmenting the wax and making patterns on the surface. As early as 800 B.C., the blind poet Homer was singing songs of painted warships (Mattera 15). The painting of ships' hulls led Greek artists to use the encaustic technique for easel painting and to decorate clay and marble sculptures (Mattera 15). In Greco-Roman Egypt, wax portraits on wooden panels were set into mummy casings. These life-size, realistic portraits (believed to be painted while the subject was still alive) were painted between 100 B.C. and 200 A.D. In these funerary portraits, we find paintings in which the "wax was applied in thin, dark to light, translucent layers" and a "rich impasto" (Mattera 16), two qualities that make encaustic, although labor-intensive, an appealing technique for contemporary painters.

It was its labor-intensiveness along with the advent of fresco, tempera, and oil painting, that led encaustic painting to fall into disuse and thus obscurity until it was revived by American painter Jasper Johns in 1954 (Mattera 18). Johns' now-famous flags, targets, and maps employ the encaustic painting technique, and he worked almost exclusively in the medium between 1954 and 1958 (Stavitsky 307). Johns said, "I went out and bought some wax and started working. It was just right for me. Everything I did became clearer" (Mattera 21).

When I began working with beeswax, it was just right for me. The three panels of *Oryoki* (figure 13) were some of the first paintings I made using the encaustic method. Encaustic painting allowed me to build multilayered, translucent surfaces that are filled with a light of their own. The beeswax captures light and creates

Fig. 13 Oryoki

beeswax and oil on 3 panels, each panel 12 x 8 inches, 2004

an internal luminosity that (nearly) by itself creates the "spiritual resonance" so important to my work. If my direction as far as subject was not clear, the method I would use to chase it down was. I can carve into the surface to make a mark or scrape layers away as necessary so that it elides perfectly with the spontaneity and mark-making inherent to my artistic process. As the wax infuses paper, the surface becomes skin-like, giving it a feeling of age, of fragility, of imminent decay. And although one may hold the solid, painted object in one's hands, there is a sense of the ephemeral in the surface, of the impermanent nature of matter.

Just as the use of the sander has come into play as a ritual act in my art, so has the step-by-step process of preparing the encaustic medium. I melt eight parts of beeswax with one part of damar resin, the curing agent, in a large kettle. The wax must first be thoroughly melted at 180 degrees. Then the resin crystals are added and the heat is turned up to 250 degrees. It is important that resin be totally melted and integrated with the wax,

otherwise the medium will be unstable. I pour the wax-resin mixture into muffin tins and allow it to cool and harden. This creates small, round cakes ready for melting, mixing with pigment, and painting. When the wax is applied it dries almost instantly, but it still must be cured or fused with heat. I have done this with various tools, including a household iron, a tacking iron, and most recently, a heat gun. The final fusing becomes part of the ritual of making—an act that must be done in order for the ritual to be successful, to work its "magic."

Encaustic painting is a somewhat difficult medium in which to work. It is labor-intensive. The wax must be kept constantly warm. It hardens nearly before it can be applied to the surface. And its effects can be fleeting if one is not mindful with the heat gun. But as painter Tony Scherman, who makes realist encaustic paintings up to eight by nine feet, said, "Not a day goes by that I don't curse the medium. It is so difficult. But it is just so extraordinary" (Mattera 97). Encaustic painting is visually extraordinary visually, tactilely extraordinary, and it has an extraordinary smell. That encaustic paint touches so many senses is important to the direction I found my work heading in.

6. CHASING WU HSIN

Through the summer of 2004, I rendered images from my collection of "trail objects," such as in *Turtle Island Elegy 1* (figure 14). More importantly, I was becoming intimate with the encaustic process—finding out what it would give me and what I would say with it. After scarring the paper and staining it with clay, I was laying on wax in thick layers and drawing into it. I used a carving tool to incise lines and then fill them with pigment. The beeswax was left clear or just slightly colored with oil pigment, usually white, burnt sienna, or raw umber. I wanted my palette to reflect the clay under my feet, to speak of the earth where the objects were found. While my most recent work uses red clay as a specific reference to place, its use in the "trail object" paintings was a more general reference to Earth. I developed a working method that combined a methodical, ritual-like application of materials with a spontaneous, action-oriented process of looking and mark-making.

Fig. 14 Turtle Island Elegy I

red clay, beeswax, oil on paper
30 x 44 inches, 2004

But the works that emerged from this period proved, ultimately, to be unsatisfying to me. Hoping to touch "emptiness" with these works, I merely touched the *idea* of emptiness. Although not object-driven, these drawings and paintings became about the objects. For example, *Dry Bone Dreaming* (figure 15) is a painting that attempts to reveal something of the impermanence of matter but, for me, becomes simply a rendering of two vertebrae on a dark ground. In Kiki Smith and Jim Dine, I had found aesthetic kinship, but I realized *my* intention was more along the lines of

Morris Graves' tempera paintings with their "spiritually realized forms" as opposed to "aesthetically invented or imitated forms" (Stomberg 19).

In Graves' work and that of his fellow Pacific Northwest painter Mark Tobey, there is an "awareness to nature and everything she manifests…an awareness of the smallest detail of her vastness as though the whole were contained therein and that from a leaf, an insect, a universe appeared" (Stomberg 18). I felt that I was achieving the fragility of the objects themselves, but not the fragile vastness I found inherent in them. For instance, in Graves' painting *Hibernation* one not only sees a mammal sleeping but also witnesses the deep dream of hibernation's long stasis.

Fig. 15 Dry Bone Dreaming

red clay, beeswax, oil on paper
30 x 44 inches, 2004

What I had hoped to achieve in this work was what the Chinese call "wu hsin," which translates as true mind or, actually, "no mind" (Baas 89). It is unselfconsciousness, or better yet, non-selfconsciousness. The problem in the work, for me, was that there was too much "self" imposed on it. Zen Master Dogen said, " To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and experience themselves is awakening" (69). In "going after" shunyata, or emptiness, I was actually pushing myself further and further from it. Composer, artist, and thinker John Cage, writing about Morris Graves, suggests that "man achieves the height of wisdom when all that he does is as self-evident as what nature does" (Graves 30).

7. CAGE & FIRE

Marcel Duchamp says that "the artist goes from intention to realization," but there is always a gap that "represents the inability of the artist to express fully his intention" (Baas 20). Perhaps the problem, the gap, is in the very idea of *expressing* one's self. The aforementioned John Cage quotation provided me an opening toward solving this problem, and my clue was in the word Cage repeats: "when all he *does* is as self-evident as what nature *does*."

By the fall of 2004 I had left the vessel behind and found my organic forms unable to articulate my intention. But what was my intention? To say something about my experience of Zen and the natural world. To say something. My first Zen teacher used to say, "Open mouth, already a mistake!"

The problem is the focus on saying something, when the focus should be on the doing. Nature does not *say;* it *is,* it *does*. As an artist, this means, for me, the bringing together of materials and experience in "a mode of enactment rather than aboutness" (Retallack xxvii). In the writing, music, and ideas of John Cage, I found a key to letting go. This key was to stop asking "What is this saying?" in favor of "What am I doing?" Cage is clear on this topic: "I don't have…the need to say anything…I try to work, or watch my work, to see if it's leaving any traces…of how it was made" (Retallack 190).

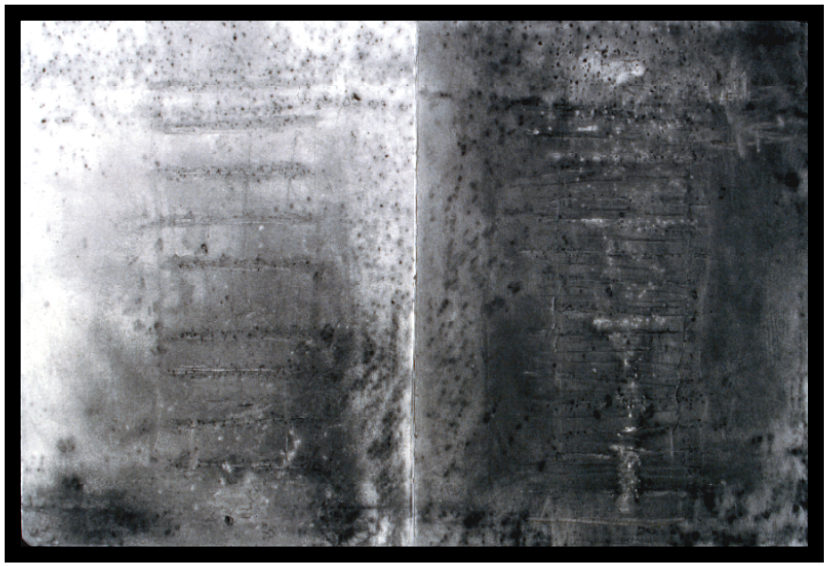


Fig. 16 Heaven Ladder

charcoal on paper, 30 x 44 inches, 2004

Fig. 17 Eight Lines I

graphite on paper, 30 x 22 inches, 2004

This statement refers to doing, to process. In all of his work, whether musical, visual or literary, Cage uses chance and silence as a way to give nature a direct say in the art. For example in his "prepared piano" pieces, objects are placed between the piano strings. The sound depends on the objects used, whether bits of rubber or nuts and bolts. Another example is his "silent" piece where the only music is the ambient sound created by the audience, the space, the weather. His art is not *about* ideas but rather, it *produces* them. Each piece is a question: What is this?

Cage understands that meaning is created by an equal collaboration between artist and viewer. He may have learned this from Duchamp who believed the "gap" between artistic intention and realization is filled by the viewer, who performs "an act of 'transubstantiation' as inert matter—pigment on paper—is experienced as a work of art" (Baas 20). For Cage, "engaging with [art] is enacting a very particular form of life, one of attentive conversation—turning toward, turning with" (Retallack xxvii).

I needed to interrupt my intention, to pull my self out of the process more. And so I began using the power sander not merely to abrade my surface but as a drawing tool. With powdered graphite or charcoal, I applied the sander in an attempt to create line and form. There was intention but little control over the result. Because the outcome was relatively unknown, I was able to let go of an attachment to it and just see what would happen. What emerged was a trace of the drawings' making—abstract,

nonobjective, completely liberating. With no trace of "nature" in them, drawings like *Heaven Ladder* and *Eight Lines 1* (figures 16 and 17) are evocative of a naturalness not found in the earlier images of "natural" objects.

One day I happened to drop a lit match onto a piece of paper. Before putting it out, I watched the burn spread and create a lovely smoky stain. This event was the impetus for me to bring fire into my work as a mark-making tool. Fire, as an element of chance, as an elemental force, was the tool that brought me more intimately into the process of drawing and painting.

I would lay wooden kitchen matches out in a meandering line or circular form, light them, and let them burn out, like a fuse. I would then bring the sander to bear upon the burn, revealing holes, brittle edges, and delicate marks I felt no pencil could make. The bringing together of chance and design revealed their interdependence to me. It was as if they could not exist without each other. Joan Retallack quotes psychoanalyst Carl Jung as saying that "every process is partially or totally interfered with by chance" (xxvii). Chance, in the shape of fire, created the opening in my work for the same type of "attentive conversation" found in the work of John Cage.

I did not know where this "new" process would take my work, but I knew I had found a means of making a transition.

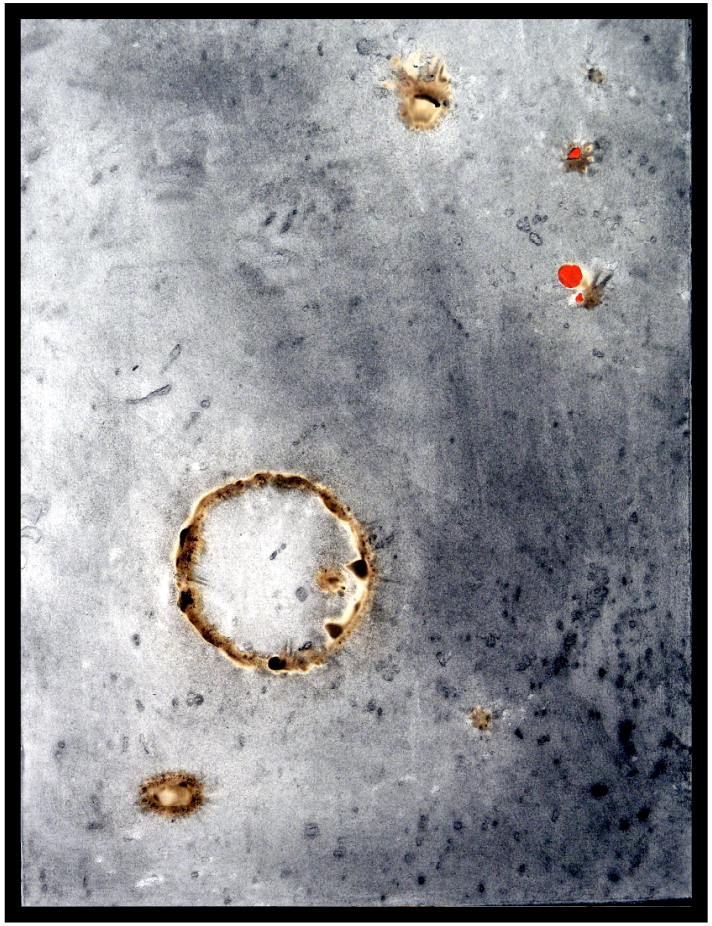


Fig. 18 Coltrane I

paper burn, graphite, beeswax, oil on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

Fig. 19 Threadgill

paper burn, graphite, beeswax, oil on paper
30 x 22 inches, 2004

This process had a kinship with the landscape investigations and power sander drawings I had been involved with earlier, but it did not have an "aboutness" to it.

I began making pieces in response to the music I was listening to. I found kinship with the improvisations of John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Henry Threadgill. I found their searching, within a song structure, for a sonic spiritual and emotional space related to what I was trying to achieve visually. I titled pieces like *Coltrane 1* and *Threadgill* (figures 18 and 19) after these composers as elements of my art reflected their music. The question for me became how to integrate the beeswax and clay with the sander and flame.

8. AWAKENING: A KOAN

One windy day in late November 2004, a red-tailed hawk tried to land in the top of a tree outside my studio. On every approach, as she spread her wings to alight, the wind would bear her up. This went on for several minutes, a half dozen attempts. Finally, she reached down with one taloned leg, grasped a branch, and pulled herself down. I "watched" this occurrence, this doing, and felt an incredible sense of accomplishment as the hawk settled down and puffed herself up against the cold. It was as if I had done it. I had had the visceral awakening to Dogen's teaching. It was not that I had witnessed, or even experienced, the hawk landing. Rather, it was that I had experiencing *myself,* with no separation between me, the event, or the moment. It was an instant of crystal edged clarity—an awakening.

And so the questions arose: What is this experience? What is it that experiences? These are questions out of Zen. They are koans, koans I knew that related directly to my art.

A koan is a tool employed by a Zen teacher to reveal a student's understanding of his or her own mind. Koans are stories, riddles, questions, conundrums. A famous koan that has made its way into the popular vernacular is "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" There are no "correct" answers to koans, only revelations. My koan, a self-imposed one, involved painting and the nature of experience. Upon entering the studio on the day of the red-tailed hawk, I "knew" how the integration of materials and methods would unfold. I could employ the ritual process of preparation in combination with chance and improvisation to turn over the compost of my experience.

For it was not individual experiences, events or objects that would reveal the sensuous world in my painting, but the accumulation of all these. The truth of emptiness, of interbeing, is that all phenomena—physical, emotional, spiritual—are dependent on all others. By fully embodying the question/koan, my process,

materials, and content become one thing. I cannot paint the sound of spring peepers or the smell of honeysuckle or the efforts of a hawk, but these join the totality of my experience, the dharmakaya, or body of truth, and help direct the line through the beeswax or emerge through a hole in the paper. I had been struggling with where my "new" artmaking processes would take me. I knew the power sander drawings and the first burn paintings were a transitional phase—but a transition into what? The exciting new means did not have an end and it was evident to me that they were not an end in themselves. My experience on that windy day seemed to make the way clear to what was to come next: the pieces that make up *Mud and Ashes*.

9. PAPER & RITUAL

I am working exclusively on paper, in particular a 140 pound Rives BFK printmaking paper. It has the resiliency to stand up to the sander and the fire while simultaneously, as it becomes infused with wax, embodying the fragility of an ancient parchment or animal hide. In paper, I have found a material surface that is the perfect ground for a continuous process. It lacks the objectness of a cradled panel or stretched canvas. Lying flat against the wall, it invites the viewer in and carries him or her along, one piece to the next—each an individual while being an integral part of a whole.

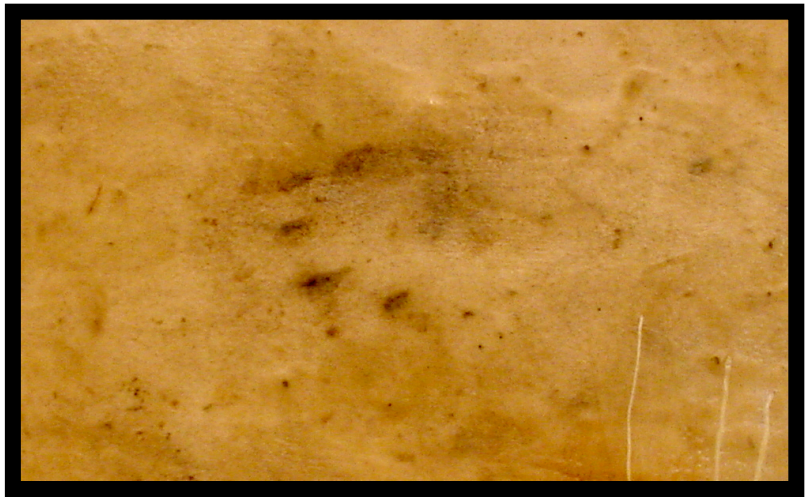


Fig. 20 Stones Turn (detail)

The paper is cut to size (22 x 22 inches), and then goes through a methodical, ritual process of preparation before drawing, burning, or painting begins. I lay the sheets out on a work table and abrade them with the power sander, then stain them with either a mixture of local red clay and water, local bee pollen and water, or powdered graphite and water (or any combination of these). Upon drying the staining process is repeated until the proper richness of color is achieved. Some sheets forego this staining process but are left outside in a wooded area to be treated/stained by the elements. Occasionally the "elements" leave surprises behind, as can be seen in the detail of *Stones Turn* (figure 20), where a small footprint provides evidence that some animal walked across the paper.

When I determine that the paper is "ready," I then begin the "drawing" process. The circle is a recurring form that has its origins with the bowls but continues as an homage to the enso, a circle painted by Japanese Zen monks to denote awakening. At the time I began this process, I was looking at quite a bit of Zen painting or zenga. The intensity of these works is derived from the monks' inner experiences, which "gives them a combination of immediacy and long-lasting flavor" (Addiss 12). The meaning of the enso, however, is "not fixed, finite, or static. Instead it becomes a form of activity through time" (Addiss 12). The circle of fire is, each time I make it, a continuation of the Zen circle.

The meandering line may be referencing cow paths, trails through the forest, or the course of one of the hundreds of streams running through the Appalachian mountains. It is, also, just a line—burned into the paper in conversation with the squared edges, burned in circles or holes/tears created by the sander.

The fire sucks moisture out of the paper and begins its transformation into "skin." Upon completion of the burn, the sander is reapplied to the burned areas to bring out the nuance of mark and to clarify the wound created by the fire. Extremely brittle edges are sanded away leaving holes or scars. This wound might speak to the wounds we inflict on the earth or upon each other. The wound could be a manifestation of the realization of suffering. As the eleventh century Sufi poet Rumi writes, "the wound" is the place "where the Light enters you" (142).

Two or three layers of beeswax are then applied to the prepared ground. I prefer to use local beeswax, from ETSU's resident beekeeper Bob Calkins. Like the pollen (also supplied by Bob) and clay, the beeswax speaks of this place. The bees are visiting local plants, helping to create the local landscape. And with the wax comes the story of the bees, such as the bear Bob once saw on his land that could have been a threat to his hives, or how one excessively cold winter and a killer mite did serious damage to bee populations. These stories go into the paintings along with the wax. One cannot get bee history, behavior, or mythology at an art supply store.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell explains to Bill Moyers in *The Power of Myth* that "by participating in a ritual, you are actually experiencing a mythological life. And it's out of that participation that one can learn to live spiritually" (Campbell 228). By creating a ritual preparation of my painting surface, I have turned painting into a spiritual act. And by using materials that come from my home ground, I am essentially sanctifying my local landscape. To Campbell, the "sanctification of the local landscape is a fundamental function of mythology" (113). It is a claiming of the land, what Campbell sees as turning the place, the land, where one lives, into "a place of spiritual relevance" (116). It is a process of becoming native.

10. NATIVENESS

What does it mean to be native? Is it simply to be born to a particular place? To me true nativeness requires intimacy, intimate knowledge of place, of people, of work, of consciousness. Nativeness ultimately reveals the nature of one's mind.

My interest in nativeness and its relevance to my art grows out of my reading of the poems and essays of Gary Snyder, a poet often associated with the Beat Generation of writers. A few of my titles, including the name of the exhibition, are gleaned from his poems. Snyder was my introduction to Zen and the initial force in my developing an environmental consciousness. One of his ongoing projects is "to translate Buddhism in the American cultural context and the American idiom" (Baas 147). But more importantly, Snyder's poetry is rooted in the place where he lives, the Sierra Mountains of northern California, and for over forty years he has investigated this place physically, mythologically, and spiritually.

One is not native if one does not know the names (not necessarily the "correct" names) of trees or birds that grow and thrive where one lives, what crops grow, what insects or animals are passing through one's yard. In Snyder's work, we find a poet who sees that "there is nothing like stepping away from the road and heading into a new part of the watershed. Not for the sake of newness, but for the sense of coming home to our whole terrain" (Snyder *Practice* 154).

Our whole terrain is the whole of our life. Where do we get the news of our lives? Is it from newspapers or television? Or is it from the migration of birds overhead, fox tracks by the hen house, in the eyes of our children, or a meal lovingly prepared and served at the end of a long day of work?

Snyder maintains that we are all "apprenticed to the same teacher…reality" (*Practice* 152). His poems address reality with a "gesture toward imprecisely defined situations and images, creating spaces in which the

reader's imagination may fall" (Baas 148) and find the true nature of things. Though specific to his experience, Synder's poems are written so that we all might see:

First three deer bounding
and then coyote streaks right after
tail flat out

I stand dumb a while two seconds
blankly black-and-white of trees and snow

Coyote's back!
good coat, fluffy tail,
sees me: quickly gone.

Later:
I walk through where they ran

to study how that news all got put down.

(*No Nature* 293).

11. HOW THE NEWS GETS PUT DOWN

The surface I have prepared to work on becomes a wide place for me to walk around in. With ceramic carving tools, oil paint, more wax and more fire, I set about leaving tracks of my activity. The process is both additive and reductive. Materials are put on or scraped down (sometimes to the very white of the paper) until the painting has presence—an inner life.

Like Cy Twombly's drawings, my paintings insist on what Heiner Bastian calls "a non-descriptive line, that is nothing more than the event of its inner manifestation" (Selz 35). In Twombly I have found a mirror for my type of mark-making. His marks seem ephemeral, more a "constant series of events" (Selz 35) rather than a story to be told. Originating from a "deep space without degrees…with flowing transitions between memory and projection, between the intellect and sureness of the hand, they assume their own reality" (Selz 36).

The carved and pigment-infused lines in my paintings, which can be seen in the detail of *We Slept in Mud and Ashes* (figure 21), are never meant to be descriptive. They move between water, path/trail, and fence row—being all, becoming none. These lines trace a passage through the process of assimilating experiences, like the trail of a snail over the forest floor.

Fig. 21
We Slept in Mud and Ashes
(detail)

Fig. 22 Compass
(detail)

One could say that the black circular voids that appear throughout my new paintings like *Compass* (figure 22) are just that, black voids. But they are also passages, doorways into and out of experience. They are made of a mix of wax and oil paint and speak to me of the hollows of trees, woodpecker holes, and rabbit warrens. They are the place of forgetting and the gateway to awakening. Look down a hole in the earth and you might see a mouse, or snake, or you may see yourself looking back. They are where decay filters down to and where new life springs forth.

Sculptor Andy Goldsworthy makes holes—black voids, like mine, only in three dimensions. He, perhaps more than any other artist, has had a profound effect on my work. He uses natural, primary materials, usually without tools, in the place where he finds them. What I feel from his work is an evident respect and interest in the land, the materials, and a strong sense of place. His artistic process is a "whole hearted immersion in the processes of nature," and involved in the "curious push-pull between art and nature" (Kino 131).

Goldsworthy says, "I'm trying to understand, not a single isolated object, but nature as a whole—how the leaf has grown, how it has decayed….By working a leaf in its place I begin to understand these processes" (Gablick 91). He further explains, "I stop at a place or pick up a material because I feel there is something to be discovered….Some places I return to over and over again, going deeper—a relationship made in layers over a long time" (Goldsworthy 4).

Goldsworthy has a repertoire of images that he repeats with different materials in different locales. He is, for me, an example of an artist who can do much with a limited number of forms. I find my recurring forms working in the same way—made in the present moment but speaking to a broader spread of time—to the spirals I saw carved in stone at Ireland's New Grange, to the petroglyphs I visited at New Mexico's Three Rivers, or to the Snake Mounds I have seen pictures of in Ohio. They are a gesture to understand a place—the "whole terrain" and one's relationship to it. They are a language that hovers just past the edge of memory, speaking perhaps not to us but to the earth and its enduring cycles.

12. FIVE IMMORTALS

Fig. 23 Five Immortals
red clay, ash, burlap, 2004

The sculptural installation that runs through the center of *Mud and Ashes* is conceived to anchor the space and speak back to the paintings—a conversation in which the language is mud and ash. On a superficial level the piece reflects the title of the exhibition and the materials used in the paintings, but those very materials address deeper issues of ecology, spirituality, time, and humanity's awareness of its immediate environment. The piece was initially named *Koan* but has since been renamed *Five Immortals*.

Formally the work seems simple enough. Four burlap sacks, originally used to ship Brazilian coffee beans, are filled with red clay. Each of these clay-filled sacks contains a center circle of ash. A centrally located fifth sack is, oppositely, filled with ash and contains a center circle of clay. In order for these sacks of dirt to become more than mere sacks of dirt, I reduced their size by folding down the lip of each three-foot sack until it was approximately knee-high and was thus transformed into a circular object—a clay circle containing an ash center and vice versa, thereby transcending "sack." These five forms, the central one slightly larger in girth and height, are aligned in a row with four feet between them. They are spotlighted from above, setting each in a pool of white light (see figures 23 and 24).

Fig. 24 Five Immortals
(detail)

By situating the forms at a distance from each other, I allow viewers to walk between them, and by settling on a height that might be just within their peripheral sight line, I create an environment that requires viewers to be mindful of their position in relation to each object. As we humans rush about in our lives, we are becoming increasingly less aware of our immediate surroundings. *Five Immortals* forces viewers to be aware of where they are as they pass through the gallery to see the paintings. They must be keep a presence of mind so as not to upset the "immortals" sitting still in the center of the space.

The five forms are reminiscent of Zen monks sitting in meditation, thus the title of the piece. Ancient Chinese and Japanese painting often portrayed enlightened beings, or arhats. They are referred to as immortals as they have transcended samsara, the continuous rounds of birth, death, and rebirth. This piece, furthermore, is representative of the Four Noble Truths put forth by Shakyamuni Buddha immediately following his enlightenment experience. The larger central form is meant to represent the whole of the teachings, the Buddhadharma. In a even larger sense, the forms stand for four schools of Buddhism—Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, and Zen—with the central form representing the idea of One Dharma as the various schools of this Eastern path continue to converse with each other as they settle and thrive in the West.

Less esoterically, in fact right under foot, the piece speaks to environmental degradation. The sight of red clay throughout the Southeastern United States (and elsewhere), while perhaps pleasing to the eye, is indicative of the absence of topsoil through erosion and development. Centuries' worth of soil evolution is carried off by wind and water as poor farming, grazing, forestry, and industrial practice has left little for the good soil to hold on to. The red clay, ash, and burlap coffee bags are a mirror revealing the reflection of overgrazing in Appalachia, clearcutting here and in other forested regions of the United States for building and paper products, and the denuding of mountainsides and destruction of rainforests in South America for the growing of coffee and the raising of beef for the North American fast food industry.

These are but a few of the ideas inherent to *Five Immortals*. There is a relationship to various creation myths, from Hopi to Christian, to the four elements, and to geological time—each sack is, after all as "old as dirt." Sculpture, especially of the installation variety, allows me an opportunity to address environmental and spiritual concerns with a combination of subtlety and directness that when spoken through painting seem to manifest a didacticism that lessens their appeal and effectiveness. I plan to continue to explore installations in concert with paintings and drawings to broaden and deepen the conversation around them.

13. FUTURE PRESENT

The works in *Mud and Ashes* are a beginning place. They represent a visual language developed to translate, into paint, encounters with the natural and cultural entities inherent to the region of Upper East Tennessee—the farms, fields, and forests. They are a mapping of consciousness in relation to environment, an inner topography of place. The object now is to expand and refine the language of dirt, wax, paint, and pollen.

There is a restlessness that runs through my art practice. I continually find myself balancing on a tension wire between abstraction and representation. The energy there interests me. And I see my future work incorporating elements of both in concert to deepen my creative exploration of Southern Appalachia. I have not come near to exhausting it. In fact, each day I find new things I wish to paint representationally. It is as if the inner eye that opened through the work in *Mud and Ashes* is now focusing its consciousness outward.

As the work in this exhibition developed, I saw a relationship to creation mythologies and procreation in general. Sprouting seeds, nature's persistence and tenacity, and the myths and arts of cultures in which there was once no distinctly separate word for art have entered the "attentive conversation" that is my artistic process. For instance, the paintings coming out of Aboriginal Australia are a complex intermingling of myth, social structure, and geography/place. Each of the Aboriginal languages has words that denote signs or other meaningful marks made by humans, but the very same words "describe the patterns of honeycombs, spiders' webs, the wave marked sand of the beach, variegated butterfly wings, and a host of other manifestations of similar formal properties" (Sutton 3).

All these are derived from the Dreaming, the complex Aboriginal mythology of continuous creation, "the power filled ground of existence' (Sutton 3). The Dreaming is the foundation of the world but is also the generative principle of the present. There is a narrative and symbolic structure to Aboriginal paintings that

mingles representation and abstraction. Each piece is at once a literal map of place, a Dreamtime almanac, and a personal or familial journey through each.

I have been learning slowly to map my inner journey through this place in Appalachia—my dreamtime—but as I continue to witness the story written on the land, I feel the need, or rather the call, to represent it. Everyday I see evidence of humanity and wildness coming together. Whether it is grass growing up through a pile of cinderblocks, ivy pouring out of an old mailbox, or honeysuckle consuming a tobacco barn, nature is constantly creating a narrative that engages my imagination and asks me to tell it.

Out of hollow trees and the pockets of scarecrows will come new work that joins fire, clay, oil, and wax to Nature's story as she tells it. In Zen there is an old saying: "Before I began to practice Zen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers. Upon entering Zen practice, mountains were no longer mountains and rivers were no longer rivers. After awakening, mountains are again mountains and rivers are again rivers."

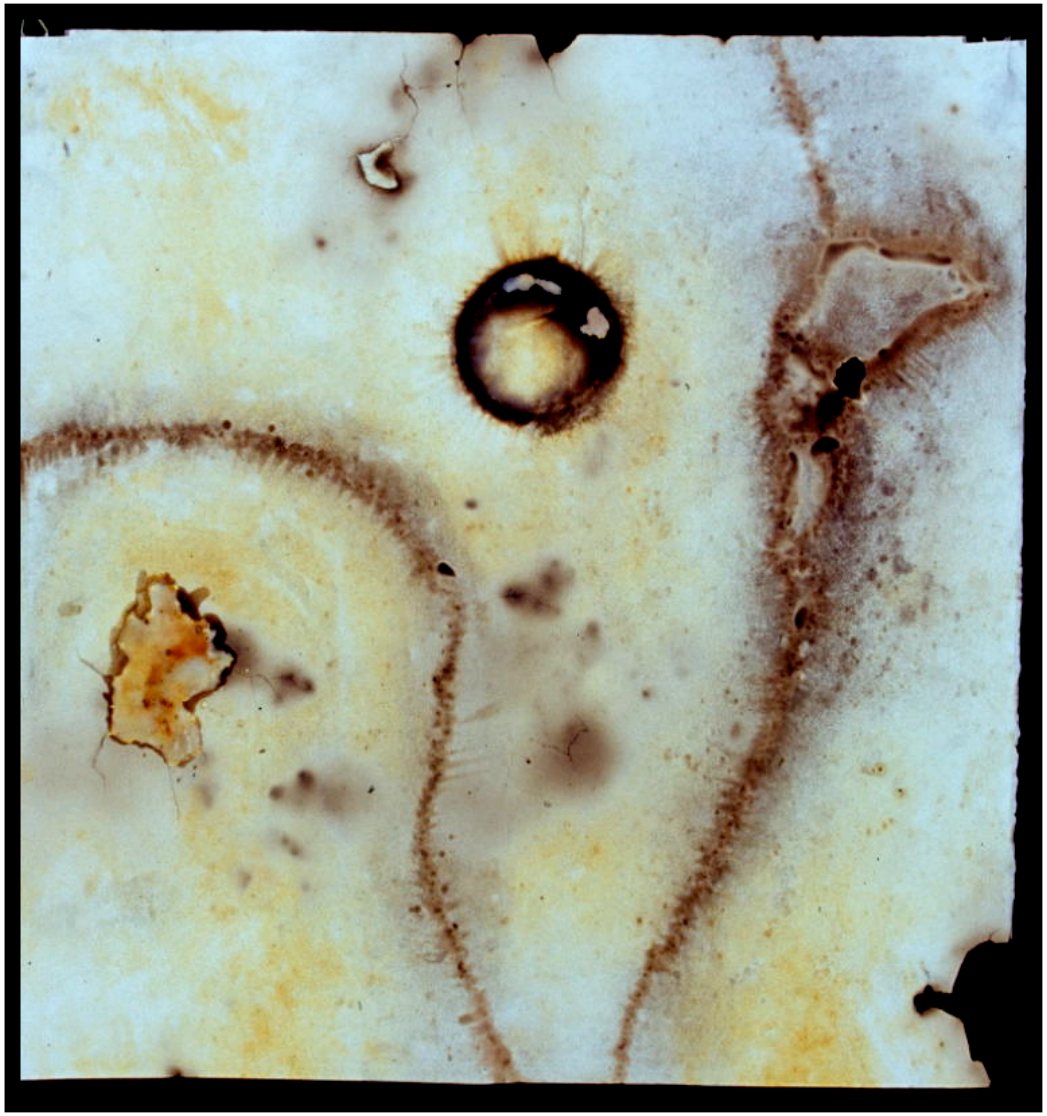
After *Mud and Ashes,* I am at the third stage as every awakening is a beginning place.

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITION

This catalogue represents *Mud and Ashes,* my Master of Fine Arts exhibition. It was held in the Slocumb Galleries, located in Ball Hall on the campus of East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee from March 28 through April 1, 2005. The exhibition consisted of fifteen paintings on paper and one sculptural installation. The paintings were pinned directly to the wall without frames. All works were created in 2005.

1. wide muddy aimless

paper burn, red clay, beeswax, oil
22 x 22 inches, 2005



This was the first piece to incorporate red clay with the burned paper. The paper was smoked and partially burned on a wood kiln before any other surface preparation or markmaking took place.

2. compass

paper burn, beeswax, pollen, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

Compass takes its name from two diagonal lines that formed a sort of compass. These lines were eventually removed as the composition progressed and I found that they were not needed.

3. stones turn

paper burn, beeswax, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

An example of paper left out in the elements for a few weeks. The surface was “prepared” by an animal, possibly a raccoon embossing a footprint into the wet paper.

4. origin (for e)

paper burn, red clay, beeswax, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

Origin (for E) is dedicated to my wife, Elizabeth. The vessel-like form speaks of womb, creation/ emergence myth, and our desire to start a family.

5. conjur(e)

paper burn, coffee, beeswax, sumi ink, pastel, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

This piece is reminiscent, for me, of American artist Romare Bearden's series of collages of the "conjur women" he grew up around in North Carolina. The form at the center of the painting *conjures* the face of one of these women. Bearden spelled conjure without the "e." I have added it in parentheses to preserve his spelling in homage to an artist whose work I respect and revere.

6. snail's progress (for thây)

paper burn, beeswax, pollen, oil
22 x 22 inches, 2005

"Thây" is a Vietnamese honorific meaning "teacher." This piece is dedicated to the Venerable Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in whose lineage I have been practicing for seven years.

7. entering the stream

beeswax, oil, red clay
22 x 22 inches, 2005

"Entering the stream" is an expression applied to someone who begins Zen practice. This is the only piece in the exhibition in which the paper was not burned. I employed the power sander and a template of staples in plywood set into a waveform. Placing the sheet of paper over the template and running the power sander over it, I was able to emboss and sometimes cut into the paper the repeating slash mark pattern that makes up the stream.

8. we slept in mud and ashes

paper burn, beeswax, red clay, oil, pollen
22 x 22 inches, 2005

This piece takes its name from a poem by Gary Snyder from his *Myths and Texts*. It was in the making of this painting that I began to feel that everything that I had been working at for the past few years was coming together with a coherence and lucidity that I had not achieved before.

9. migration

paper burn, beeswax, pollen, oil, graphite
22 x 22 inches, 2005

The combination of bee pollen and powdered graphite created an otherworldly blue-green in this piece that I had not anticipated. What began as a tracing of a waterway became an investigation of the relationship between the micro- and macro-cosmic worlds.

10. it was made of pollen and rain

paper burn, beeswax, dry pigment, oil
22 x 22 inches, 2005

In this painting, which takes its title from the opening of N. Scott Momaday's novel, *House Made of Dawn*, I blended a dry pigment into the red clay. It was natural red ochre, a gift from Anita DeAngelis, used by the aborigines of Australia in their paintings. *It Was Made of Pollen and Rain* is by far the most vibrantly colored painting in the show.

11. 3 crows (on the edge of the world laughing)

paper burn, beeswax, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

What's the center of the world? poet Joy Harjo asks. For most humans, it's where we live—it might be Tokyo, Paris, or Johnson City, TN. But for a crow, it might be the greasy piece of fat he finds in a discarded fast food bag. It's all a matter of priorities. The agitated surface leaves the three black forms at the lower right (and their reflections) to wonder if we might not have our priorities a bit out of place. It may take an act by a trickster like crow to reveal that to us.

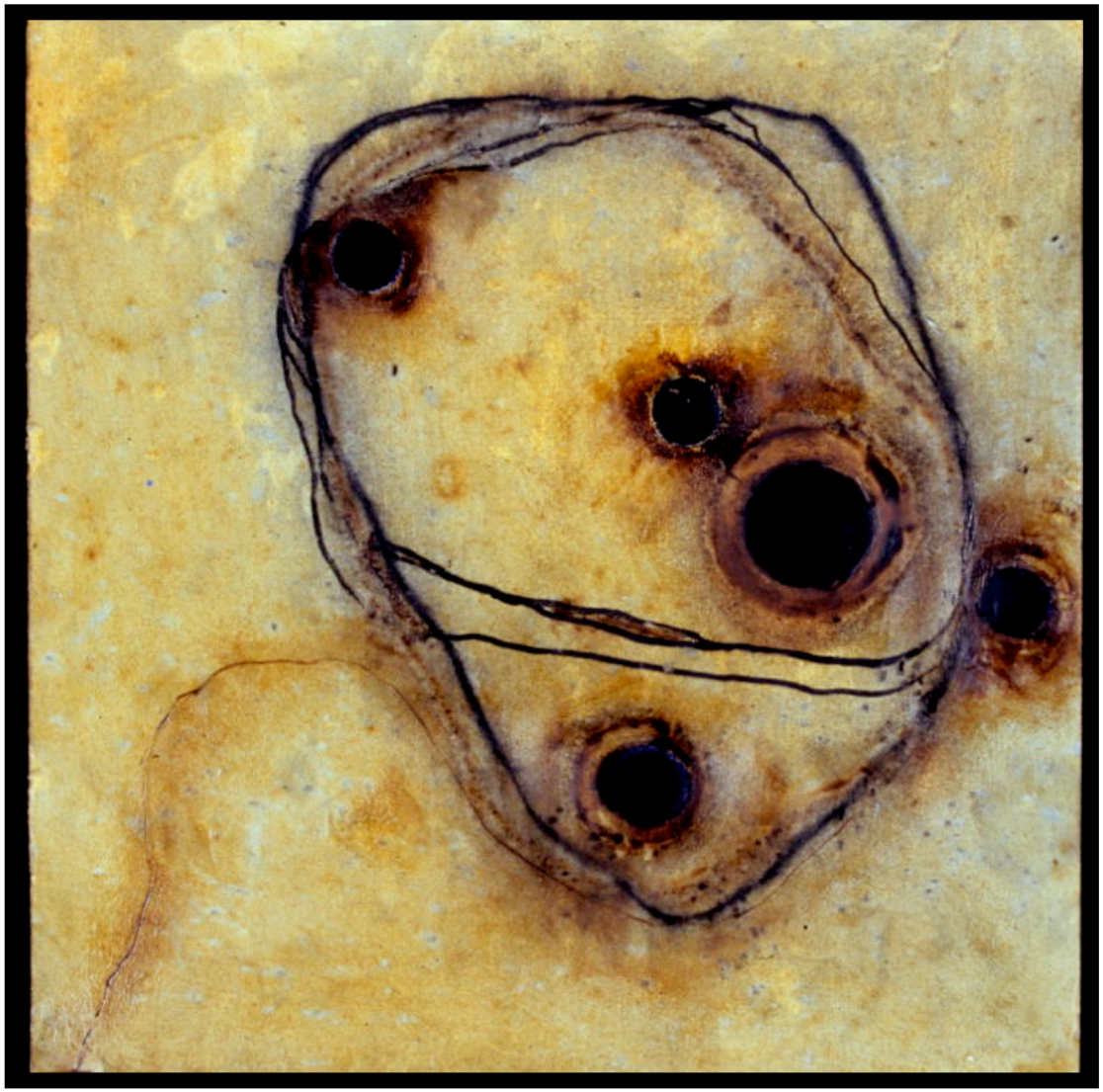
12. daruma daruma

paper burn, coffee, beeswax, sumi ink, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

"Daruma" is the Japanese name for Bodhidharma, the first ancestor of Zen. As this painting progressed I noticed a similarity to some Zen paintings of this intense fellow. The two forms became two heads, thus *Daruma Daruma*.

13. stonehead

paper burn, beeswax, red clay, sumi ink, oil
22 x 22 inches, 2005



This painting is named for an

ancient Zen master who used

a stone for a pillow. Enough said.

14. water dreaming

paper burn, beeswax, oil, charcoal
22 x 22 inches, 2005

It is not I dreaming of water but

rather it is water dreaming itself.

I am not sure if this painting

is finished yet.

Perhaps the dream is not over.

15. emergence

paper burn, red clay, beeswax, oil
22 x 22 inches, 2005

The Kiowa say they emerged into this world through a hollow log. The Hopi passed through four worlds to get to this one. This piece represents, for me, coming out into the light. The holes are definitely passages in this piece. This painting was placed last in the exhibition because, like an emergence, it is a place of beginning.

16. five immortals

red clay, ashes, burlap sacks
2005

As I broke down the exhibition at the end of its run and all that remained were five perfect rings of dust where the sculpture had been, I realized that after nine years I finally had a reply to the question put to me by Barnaby Evans' *Waterfire*.
My answer resides in the clay, ash, wax, and time that make up *Mud and Ashes*.

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Stomberg, John. Looking East: Brice Marden, Michael Mazur, Pat Steir. Seattle: UP Washington, 2002.

Sussman, Elizabeth. Eva Hesse. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002.

Sutton, Peter, ed. Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia. New York: Braziller, 1988.

Suzuki, Shunryo. Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.

Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen. New York: North Point, 1985.

Weitman, Wendy. Kiki Smith: Prints, Books, and Things. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003.

Wilkin, Karen. Giorgio Morandi. New York: Rizzoli, 1997.

Wylie, Charles. Brice Marden: Work of the 1990's, Painting, Drawing, and Prints. Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1998.

VITA

TIMOTHY MCDONALD
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EDUCATION

2005 Master of Fine Arts, Painting
East Tennessee State University (overall 4.0 GPA)

1983 Bachelor of Arts, Studio Art and English Literature
University of Rhode Island

COLLEGE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2005 ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Courses: ARTA 1201: Drawing Fundamentals

2003-05 TEACHING ASSISTANT (Instructor of Record)
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Courses: ARTA 1110: 2-D Design, ARTA 1201: Drawing Fundamentals

GUEST LECTURER/INSTRUCTOR
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Courses: ARTA 1110: 2-D Design, ARTA 2051: Foundations in Painting,
ARTA 3110: Intermediate Painting, ARTA 4957/5957: Special Topics in Art

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

* INDICATES SOLO EXHIBITION

2005 *Mud and Ashes*, Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN*
College Art Association Regional MFA Exhibition, Lowe Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Mute, Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN

2004 *Invocations*, AR Gallery, Johnson City, TN*
The Option, Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Postcard Show, Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Salon Show, AR Gallery, Johnson City, TN
First Tennessee Bank Annual Exhibition, Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN

2003 *Only This*, Allison Gallery, Tusculum College, Greeneville, TN*
Burning Bright II, Nelson Fine Arts Gallery, Johnson City, TN
First Tennessee Bank Annual Exhibition, Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN
Appalachian Art Annual Exhibition, Kingsport Art Guild, Kingsport, TN

2002 *Burning Bright*, Nelson Fine Arts Gallery, Johnson City, TN

2001 *Positive/Negative*, Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
Go Figure, Allison Gallery, Tusculum College, Greeneville, TN
First Tennessee Bank Annual Exhibition, Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN

2000 *Forgotten Language*, C. Francis Gallery, Providence, RI*

1998 *Earthwards*, AS220 Gallery, Providence, RI*
Three Artists, Deblois Gallery, Newport RI

1996 *Annual Juried Exhibition*, Sarah Doyle Gallery, Brown University, Providence, RI
Ghosts, The Waiting Room Gallery, Providence RI
Presence, The Waiting Room Gallery, Providence RI

PRESENTATIONS & AWARDS

2005 "The Inside Looking Out: Making Post-Public Art with Conceptualist Mel Chin, or How to Spackle a WMD," Southern Humanities Council Annual Conference, Richmond, VA

2004 "The Sound (?) of Rhetoric," Southern Humanities Council Annual Conference, Chattanooga, TN

Nominee, Dedalus Foundation Masters of Fine Arts Fellowship in Painting and Sculpture

GRANTS & COMMUNITY SERVICE

2001-05 Artist-in-Residence: Rural Resources, Greeneville, TN

2003 Guest Curator: Allison Gallery, Tusculum College, Greeneville, TN

2002 Tennessee Arts Commission Grant: ArtFarm, Greene County, TN

Johnson City Area Arts Council ABC "Arts Build Communities" Grant: Arts Field Day, Greeneville, TN

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

College Art Association (CAA)
Southeastern College Art Conference (SECAC)
Southern Humanities Council
Greeneville Arts Council
ETSU Painting and Drawing Association